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Letter of Abraham Lincoln to Charles R. Welles.

Springfield, Illinois, October 9, 1914.

Illinois State Historical Society,

Mrs. Jessie Palmer Weber, Secretary,
City.

My Dear Mrs. Weber:

I herewith, through you, present to the Society a letter dated Washington, February 20, 1849, from A. Lincoln to C. R. Welles. With this letter I send some explanatory notes with reference to the persons named in the letter and some of the circumstances referred to in it.

The whole of the letter is in Mr. Lincoln's own handwriting.

I also enclose you a note of invitation dated February 21, 1863, to Mr. James C. Conkling to dine informally with President Lincoln. You will note the black border upon the envelop and the note. The frank upon the envelop is in Mr. Lincoln's own handwriting.

My father, Mr. James C. Conkling, had occasion to visit Washington in February, 1863, on behalf of the State of Illinois. It was difficult in those days to secure a hearing before the heads of the departments, and especially so with Secretary Stanton. Mr. Lincoln desired to facilitate as much as possible the business and so gave to Mr. Conkling, among other cards of a similar nature, the enclosed directed to the secretary of war. The whole of the writing on this card as well as the signature is in the handwriting of Mr. Lincoln.

I also enclose you an original letter in the handwriting of Senator Stephen A. Douglas. This is written to General James Shields, familiarly known as "Paddy Shields." Judge Douglas writes about his first experiences as a judge and the

letter has some political interest in view of the bitterness of those days and of that especial election. With this letter I send a memorandum referring to several of the persons mentioned in it.

The fragment of an order dated July 22, 1846, and signed by Colonel E. D. Baker, has no particular interest that I know of but I send it to you for what it may be worth.

All of the above papers were for many years in the possession of my father, James C. Conkling, and passed from his possession to mine, and I now take great pleasure in presenting them to the Illinois State Historical Society.

Yours truly,

Clinton L. Conkling.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN TO C. R. WELLES.

Washington, Feb. 20, 1849.

C. R. Welles, Esq.

Dear Sir:

This is Tuesday evening, and your letter enclosing the one of Young & Brothers to you, saying the money you sent by me to them had not been received, came to hand last Saturday night— The facts, which are perfectly fresh in my recollection, are these: You gave me the money in a letter (open I believe) directed to Young & Brothers— To make it more secure than it would be in my hat, where I carry most all my packages, I put it in my trunk— I had a great many jobs to do in St. Louis; and by the very extra care I had taken of yours overlooked it— On the Steam Boat near the mouth of the Ohio, I opened the trunk, and discovered the letter— I then began to cast about for some safe hand to send it back by— Mr. Yeatman, Judge Pope's son-in-law, and step-son of Mr. Bell of Tennessee, was on board, and was to return immediately to St. Louis, from the Mouth of Cumberland— At my request, he took the letter and promised to deliver it—and I heard no more about it till I received your letter on Saturday— It so happens that Mr. Yeatman is now in this City; I called on him last night about it; he said he remembered my giving him the letter, and he could remember nothing more of it— He

told me he would try and refresh his memory, and see me again concerning it to-day—which, however, he has not done—I will try to see him to-morrow and write you again— He is a young man, as I understand, of unquestioned, and unquestionable character; and this makes me fear some pick-pocket on the boat may have seen me give him the letter, and slipped it from him— In this way, never seeing the letter again, he would, naturally enough, never think of it again—

Yours truly,

A. Lincoln.

EXPLANATORY NOTES CONCERNING LETTER DATED FEBRUARY
20TH, 1849, FROM A. LINCOLN TO C. R. WELLES.

Mr. Charles R. Welles was a lawyer and land agent in Springfield, Illinois. He was agent for John Grigg of Philadelphia, a capitalist and western land owner of that day and after his, Welles' death, James C. Conkling succeeded to that business and was agent for the Griggs for many years. From him the letter passed into the hands of his son, Clinton L. Conkling. Mr. Welles was one of the best men that ever lived. He resided where the Bettie Stuart Institute is now located, on the northwest corner of Jackson and Fourth streets. That was the old home, and he lived in a little white house back by the railroad, where he died in about 1855. There was a little stream running through the grounds in front of the house and a foot-bridge over it.

Young Bros. were wholesale clothing merchants in St. Louis in 1856, and were a very prominent and responsible firm.

At that time it was a very common occurrence for travelers to take letters for their friends and deliver them in St. Louis. Persons going to Philadelphia or St. Louis used frequently to carry letters or packages, especially to the ladies, as there was no express in those days. This service was a regular nuisance.

Travelers used to go from Springfield to Washington in the early days by railroad to Naples and thence by river to St. Louis, then by boat up the Ohio to Wheeling, where they would take the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad to Washington.

Mr. Yeatman, son-in-law of Judge Pope, was named James E., and was at one time a director in the Merchants Bank of St. Louis, then cashier, and finally president. He was one of St. Louis' most substantial citizens, and was head of the house of Yeatman, Robinson & Company, commission and forwarding.

Judge Pope was Judge Nathaniel Pope of the United States Court at Springfield, and was succeeded in that office by Judge Samuel H. Treat. He was the grandfather of Mrs. Cornelia P. Bowen of Springfield.

Mr. Bell was Senator John Bell of Tennessee, and was on the presidential ticket of Bell and Everett in 1860, the same year in which Mr. Lincoln was elected president.
October 9, 1914.

C. L. C.